

**ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP**  
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**Memorandum**

**To: ENRP Co-Chairs Sean O'Connor & Barry Weinstein, MD**

**From: Tourism & Culture Chair Robert Blanchard**

**Re: April & May 2003 meetings**

**Date: June 6, 2003**

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The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership's Tourism & Culture Subcommittee met April 15, 2002 at Niagara University and May 28, 2003 at the Niagara Falls Comfort Inn. Present for the April meeting were subcommittee members Blanchard, Lawson, and Casale, as well as Charlene Ritter-Lester from Erie County DEP. Present for the May meeting were subcommittee members Blanchard, Casale, and Geiger (proxy).

Regional Cultural Tourism Initiative

Following last year's issuance of the report, "Cultural Tourism in The Buffalo-Niagara Region: Developing A Comprehensive Plan Phase 1: Inventory of Cultural Tourism Planning Initiatives, Recommendations for Pursuing a Comprehensive Plan," the UB Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth, through funding from the John R. Oishei Foundation and Erie County, has begun the next phase of the Regional Cultural Tourism Initiative.

Work is being done by three subcommittees – capacity building, marketing, and implementation. Subcommittee Chair Blanchard is also chairing the Initiative's implementation subcommittee; ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk is acting as the group's representative, and several ENRP members are present to represent their various organizations. The goal is to have a set of recommendations – in the form of a comprehensive plan for cultural tourism – ready by the end of the year for implementation in 2004.

Tourist Signage

Last year the subcommittee completed an inventory of desired tourist directional signs on our region's thruways and expressways. That list was compiled with the input of the ENRP and municipalities throughout the two counties. The intent was to convince NYSDOT and the Thruway Authority to place these signs, after which we would move on to placing directional

signs in municipalities to connect people from the thruway exit to the attraction. The state responded that they want to see municipal signs up first.

This year, ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk was asked to serve as project manager for a cultural tourism directional sign project for the City of Buffalo, in anticipation of One Summer Long Sensation. While this project was put together on very short notice, it is coming together well.

The subcommittee feels that this Buffalo project could act as a pilot for a longer term, comprehensive sign project. The project would most likely have three components – thruway and highway directional signage, municipal directional signage, and descriptive signs at the attractions themselves. It is understood that a comprehensive project such as this will be a multi-year effort.

As such a comprehensive signage project will no doubt be recommended as part of the Cultural Tourism Initiative (it has been mentioned in all three of the subcommittees), and as we have already done work in this field, **the Tourism & Culture Subcommittee is seeking approval to offer its services to the Regional Cultural Tourism Initiative to act as the implementer of a comprehensive attraction sign program for Erie and Niagara Counties.**

#### Other Issues

Other issues discussed included the possible consolidation of tourist groups under the Initiative, involvement of the Seneca Nation of Indians in tourism efforts, the regional asset component of the power relicensing project (is there one?), and the possible merging of fishing promotion efforts (it was noted that a good first step has been the Buffalo Niagara CVB taking over the Erie County side of this).